

## 5 Conclusions

Any measure which summarizes a complex phenomena must achieve a balance between simplicity and uncertainty. Ecometrics, which are essentially comparative tools developed to suggest improvements, are no exception. ECOMETRICS'98 concluded with a recommendation that metrics be developed based on function rather than products. Clearly, the context is also essential in the definition, or selection, of an appropriate metric with the user and purpose of the analysis required. As with most debates, a consensus is usually reached on further questions rather than resolution. In the ecometrics area two practical questions arose.

1. *Can intensive microecometrics improve the information exchange throughout the supply chain so as to carry out assessments more comprehensively?*
2. *Can multi-stakeholder peer reviewed microecometrics improve the cooperation among the industry and government sectors?*

The overwhelming opinion of the multistakeholder ECOMETRICS'98 forum was to validate microecometrics by employing life cycle concepts. However, practically, representatives of industry and public groups alike, discussed the need to conduct life cycle assessments without rigorous life cycle inventories. In regard to the latter it should be mentioned that SETAC-Europe has working groups attempting to find practical applications for LCA in decision making, and to define an implementable set of Life Cycle Management tools.

Intensive microecometrics are akin to temperature readings, reflecting the current state. When evaluating how to define such measures, one invariably poses questions such as "what time is it?". Macroecometrics, and the link of microecometrics to sustainability, require predictive measures, much more similar to a barometric reading. The development of these global thresholds and measures is more philosophical, and certainly subjective and value dependent. The relevant analogy in such cases is "what is time?".

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### Conference Announcement: 9th Annual Meeting of SETAC-Europe

May 25-29, 1999, Leipzig, Germany

The organisation of this international meeting is shared by the SETAC-Europe office in Brussels, the UFZ Centre for Environmental Research in Leipzig and the University of Leipzig. The conference site will be the auditoria of the University of Leipzig which is located in the centre of Leipzig. The main theme "Quality of the Life and Environment in Cultured Landscapes" reflects the need to take into account ecological as well as economic and social aspects in developing concepts for a sustainable development of societies.

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